



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

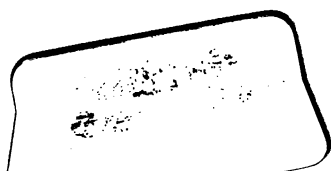
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NEW SERIES OF SIXPENNY BOOKS
Stories with a Purpose



MOTHER'S BLESSING
AND OTHER STORIES



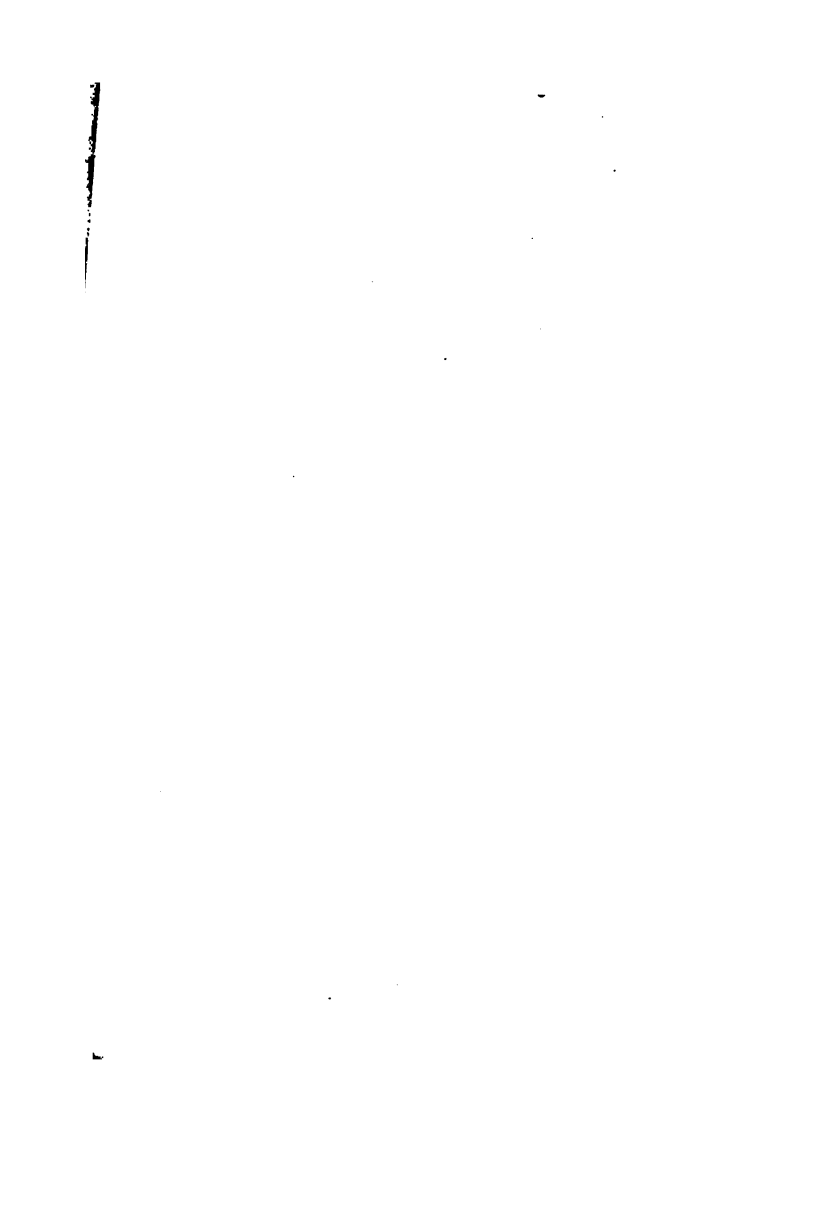






A MOTHER'S BLESSING.









PARTING WORDS

A MOTHER'S BLESSING

AND

Other Stories.



LONDON:

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.

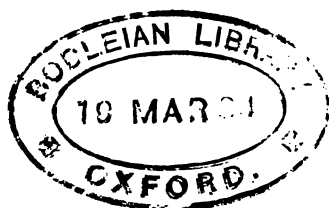
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1881.

1689

1275

~~92~~



Contents.



A MOTHER'S BLESSING,	...	...	...	...	7
FRED AND KATIE LANE,	...	...	...	...	23
BLACK LAKE,	...	...	.	...	51

A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

THE important day had arrived on which Ernest C——, for the first time, was to leave his father's house. Hitherto the thought of separation had not been painful; for what young spirit does not hail the prospect of change and novelty? But when this morning, the day of his journey, he opened his eyes, the sudden remembrance, To-day I must depart! stood like an armed man before him, and seemed so terrifying, that he could have wished the whole were but a dream. Yet it was no dream, but a sure and bitter truth. Till now, Ernest had been well

instructed under the care of a father and a tutor; but the time had come when he must go to the college of a large city to pursue his studies, if he desired to make any figure in future life.

It was early in the morning when he awoke, and all within doors silent. He dressed quickly, and went out into the garden. All was lovely without, full of freshness and fragrance,—the white lilies glittering, the roses blushing, under the morning dew; the silence so solemn, that he could only tread softly, as he moved towards the birch copse, where, under an overhanging rock, was his usual place of morning prayer.

Just then he heard the voice of his mother calling him. He started, and hurried back to the house, where a servant told him that his mother desired he should go to her in her chamber.

With deep emotion she came towards him as he entered. She was quite dressed,

and appeared to have been long up. She drew Ernest along with her into a recess of the window, and said: "My son, you must now leave your father's house, and the thought that I shall no longer be able each day to pray with you lies heavy on my heart. You know that the heart of man is evil from his youth, and that we live in a world of temptations, which we need a strong arm to help us safely through. That arm is the grace of our Saviour. To his grace I commend you, that it may preserve you to everlasting life. You can repel and resist it, or draw it down by earnest prayer. My son, alike in joy and in sorrow look up by prayer to the Lord! Do not be content with morning and evening devotions, but apply to the Saviour in every duty, in every difficulty, and he will be to you in the place of father, mother, teacher—he will be to you all in all."

Ernest was deeply moved. He gave no

promise in words, but gazed on his mother with a look which her heart well understood. "Come, my son," she said, "let us once more together implore for you the mercy and help of our Lord." She knelt down, and Ernest by her side. The mother prayed with warmth and fervour, then blessed her son and embraced him. He was not ashamed of the tears which he could not restrain; he felt as if standing on holy ground, and never before had he so strongly felt that parents stand in the place of God.

"Dear Ernest," said his mother, as they rose from their knees, "I must give you remembrance of this sacred hour—it longed to the early days of your father."

She took two silver buckles out of her writing-desk, and gave them to Ernest. It was the custom then for both men and women to wear buckles on their shoes. "Take these," she said; "and when you

at them remember your mother's parting words,—In joy and in sorrow look up by prayer to the Lord."

Ernest took the parting gift; he looked at his mother—she was very pale.

"Never in my whole life," he thought, "will I grieve her again."

The last hour quickly passed; he received the last kiss of his parents, embraced his sisters, then the carriage rolled away and bore him towards his new home.

This was in the house of a professor,—an earnest, upright man, who most conscientiously devoted himself to the care of the youths committed to his charge, of whom there were always a number under his roof.

Ernest's good abilities and previous instruction raised him at once to a higher class than his age would have entitled him to enter. This brought with it many cares. The boy had need of all his own efforts,

and especially of his mother's parting counsel. The work set before him was not easy, but yet not beyond his power. From his earliest years he disliked doing anything by halves; whatever he did must be well done. Before each task he prayed to the Lord, who once gave to Daniel and his friends "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom," and his prayer was heard.

Ernest was soon the best scholar, and at the same time, from his pleasing disposition and manner, the favourite of all around him. Alas! to be a favourite is what few can stand. When he came to feel secure in his position, when every task seemed to become easy, he no longer sought of God help in each undertaking, for victory appeared sure beforehand. He prayed, indeed, regularly in the morning and evening, but not now from a deep feeling of necessity—rather a sense of duty; and the

echoes of his mother's parting words fell more and more faintly on memory's ear.

One day he and two other boys had accomplished a difficult task so well, that they were as a reward to take a walk wherever they pleased from four to seven o'clock. "To the Castle Rock!" they exclaimed with delight, and hastened along the way leading to the cliffs, following the course of a noisy stream, whose wooded banks were overgrown with wild plants and flowers. It was a beautiful path, under old noble fir-trees, leading to a magnificent prospect from the heights above. There the youths stood on the highest mass of rock, and gazed below, each in the direction of his father's house,—the thoughts of each different and yet the same, "Oh, how beautiful it is *at home!*"

And their Father in heaven looked down upon them with his blessing, desiring by this earthly home-sickness to make them

understand the longings of his children for their heavenly home.

And as they looked around on the beautiful landscape—the plains, the rivers, the mountain chains beyond—and each heart wandered to where its own treasure lay, hark! the evening bell sounded from the vale below, and soft and peaceful as were the tones, the boys heard them with terror. They looked at one another for a moment as if confounded—"they had never dreamed of its being so late"—and without another word hurried down the mountain; for punctuality as to hours was one of the professor's strictest rules, any infringement of which was severely punished.

Never had they so rapidly descended from the Castle Rock. But now—to the right or the left? They had still a quarter of an hour—no more, and the right way, by the highroad, was long and dusty; the left one, through a meadow of long grass,

decidedly nearer, but a forbidden path. They stood at the crossing and looked at one another—right or left? Their hearts beat quickly; the voice of God spoke loudly and distinctly within, "To the right!" Ernest, who from childhood had been accustomed to the strictest obedience, made a step forward on the road, and said, "To the right!"

"We shall be too late—it must not be!" exclaimed the others. "Once is nothing!"

Ernest reluctantly turned; his conscience remonstrated, but the dread of punishment prevailed. The boys hurriedly ran through the meadow.

"Whoso offendeth in one point is guilty of all,"—so had Ernest's mother often taught him: these words returned to his mind now, and made each step difficult and painful. Gladly would he have retraced his path, but time, time—it was so late! More than once, when the boys imagined that

they heard the step of a ground officer, they crouched down in the long grass, and waited in fear and anguish till all was still again. At length they were nearly at the end of the field, and trod more lightly. Seven could not have struck, or they would have heard it; a few steps more, and they would be at home.

Suddenly Ernest stood still, as if fixed to the spot, and looked at his shoes. "What is it, Ernest? what is the matter? Come on!" called the others to him, but he went back instead of forwards.

"One of my buckles is gone," he said, with a look of distress; "come and help me to find it."

The boys turned back and followed their companion into the field; with anguish of heart they retraced the forbidden road. O must they bear their terror a second time They sought and sought in vain—the ho of seven sounded. Each stroke of the cloc

was like the blow of a strong hand on their ear.

"We must go home, Ernest—come; early to-morrow we will come here again and search with you."

But Ernest would not turn back; while he had strength to move and eyes to look with, he must search on. It was the silent messenger from his home, that had ever spoken so much to his heart; could he leave this treasure behind? That were a sin against his mother—any punishment rather than this.

"I cannot turn—leave me; I shall look as long as I can see." So saying he went on further, and the others left him with sorrow and reluctance.

Ernest was now alone. A cool dew lay on the long grass; it was already twilight—all was still, nothing heard but the croaking of frogs in the marsh. There are moments in life when the Lord, for our

chastisement, allows our hearts altogether to fail; and such was now Ernest's case. An inexpressible anguish fell on the boy's spirit; it seemed as if he were forsaken and alone in the wide world.

He wandered restlessly on, looking under every flower, alas! in vain—nothing, nothing of his buckle! His distress seemed to increase. "Oh, if my beloved mother were here," he thought, "she would help me to look for it." And with the thought of his mother such home-sickness came over him he burst into tears—yes, the brave Ernest, whom hardly any one had known to weep, sunk on the grass and wept bitterly, feeling as if he were the greatest sinner and the most friendless being on the earth.

Then the words seemed as if spoken to his soul, "In joy and in sorrow look up by prayer to the Lord." His mother's parting words of late he had seldom remembered, and yet seldomer obeyed them. But now

he knelt down, and looking up to heaven, prayed "out of the depths" for pardon, for an obedient heart, for the restoration of his lost treasure. And after that prayer he felt that his heart was lightened, his mother seemed brought nearer to him, and he felt nearer to his Saviour.

"How my burden has been taken away!" he thought, and as he rose up his eye fell upon something shining. It was no dew-drop, no pebble, no flower—it was his own silver buckle. Then joy and gratitude filled the boy's soul; he seized his jewel, he sunk down again to give thanks; he had not found that alone, but his mother's heart—yes, he had found his Saviour anew, and he went on his way rejoicing. Now the moment had come when the blessing which the mother had laid upon him at parting started into real life.

As he drew near the house he perceived with joy that in the school-room, where

lessons began punctually at seven, there was still no light, though the hour had long since struck. He entered softly, and heard that a visitor having come, the class was deferred till half-past seven. Taking his right place among the other scholars, his being too late was taken no notice of.

Should he keep silence? Was it perhaps the kindness of his God and Saviour which had thus providentially concealed his fault and averted the punishment? Was it an answer to prayer that the professor had no suspicions? Should Ernest say nothing?

No, no, no! "It must be told," sounded in his heart; and rising up before the lesson began, he confessed, not without deep blushes, but frankly and firmly, his having been too late, and his walk through the forbidden meadow, the loss and the finding again of his buckle; and ended with the words, "I ask your forgiveness—I have deserved punishment."

His two companions had stood up unobserved by him, and began, as with one voice: "Mr. Professor, the punishment belongs to us, not to Ernest; he wanted to go by the road, but we insisted on the path through the meadow."

The professor looked lovingly on the three, who stood awaiting their sentence. "Boys," he said, "you have done wrong, for obedience is the first and last duty of a Christian, but I see how you have been grieved for it. God has forgiven you, my young friends, and so I also forgive."


Then he took each so warmly by the hand, that each one felt as if his own father stood before him, and gave him the token of forgiveness and of blessing. As soon as the class was over, the three boys were seen going to the house of the city magistrate. They paid the allotted fine, for their trespass on the forbidden ground, from their own pocket-money.

That day was soon ended ; but the blessing lasted through a long life. Ernes joined himself to the band of many thousand faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose unspeakable happiness it is in joy and in sorrow, to be able to look up to him who has said, " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest "—" Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

FRED AND KATIE LANE.

CHAPTER I.

BUYING THE TRUTH.

“HAT are you doing, Fred?” cried a cheery voice, one pleasant Saturday afternoon, and down the neat gravel walk tripped a sunny-faced little girl of about seven years. Brother Fred lay under the great elm-tree at the foot of the garden, with a little book open before him, and a very puzzled look on his usually happy face.

“Don’t trouble me, Katie,” said he rather shortly. “I’ve such a long lesson to learn for to-morrow.”

"O Fred," said she coaxingly, "let's let it together."

"Why, you little simpleton!" cried Fred laughing with such a funny face, that Katie although somewhat grieved, was obliged to laugh too. For when Fred had a merriment thought, it was not content with stretching his rather large mouth, but it ran all over his face, twinkled in his eyes, and finally played hide-and-seek in two or three curious little holes which mamma called dimples, but where Katie contended the good angels had touched him when he was a baby.

"Now, Fred," said she rather reproachfully, when he was done laughing "over,"—"now, Fred, what did I do?"

"Why, pet," said Fred, "you have known how to read long, and have to say all the hard words now; you wouldn't be a help at all."

"But perhaps," persisted Katie, "if you read the lesson, I could *explain* some of

for mother and I have such long talks together while you are away at school."

Fred laughed again, and said:—

"Just to think of your explaining anything to *me*, when I am four years older, and a *boy* besides."

Katie turned away with eyes like violets after a shower.

"Well, well; come back, little sister," cried Fred, half sorry that he had grieved her. "Come back, I should like to ask your opinion on something."

Katie paused, with a doubtful face.

"What does this mean," said he: "'Buy the truth, and sell it not'?"

"Why," said Katie, twisting her small fingers nervously, "what do *you* think, brother Fred?"

"I *don't* think," said Fred, "that's just the trouble. I suppose I know what *truth* is, but I didn't know anybody kept it to sell, and I don't know how much I'd have to pay

for it. If I could find it I'd buy a great deal, and wouldn't sell it very soon either; for Mr. West told me last Sunday that a boy couldn't have too much of it," and Fred smiled, forgetting his own perplexity in watching his little sister's anxious face.

"Fred," said Katie at length, "I believe you are half making fun of me. Nobody keeps truth to sell, just as Mrs. Mills does oranges and candy, but I think it is something God keeps, and when we ask him for it we don't pay for it with money; but—but—*but*," continued Katie, "we will go and ask mother."

Mrs. Lane was just starting on a walk to visit some poor neighbours who lived more than a mile away, but when she heard the eager questions of her children, she permitted them to accompany her across the fields, that they might talk the whole matter over together.

"Katie is right," said mamma, after listen-

ing to the little girl's statement of the case.

"We must go to God for truth."

"Do you mean," asked Fred, "that we must ask God to help us to *speak* the truth?"

"Yes, that is part of it; but there is a wider meaning," said his mother. "When we ask God for truth—when we pray, 'Lead us in thy truth,' we pray that God would make us Christians, would make us Christ-like, pure and holy like himself, for he is *the Truth*."

"Then, mother, if he *gives* us all this when we ask him, how can we pay him?"

"My dear Fred, you could never pay him for all he has done for you. The greatest angel in heaven could not *pay* God, but he offers the greatest blessings 'without money and without price.'"

"How can we *buy* truth, then?" said Fred with a puzzled air.

"Ah!" said his mother, "I see your trouble

now. The meaning of that little verse is only that we must be willing to give up everything for the truth—everything, however dear to us, that stands between us and it.”

“What must we give him?” asked Katie earnestly. “What could *I* give him?”

“A great deal,” said her mother. “You can say, ‘Here, Father, take my *hands*. They are small now, but they are ready for any work thou hast for them to do. I give thee my *feet*; they shall never grow tired in thy service. I give thee my *tongue*; oh, let it never say anything to displease thee. ‘Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.’ And, above all give thee my *heart*. Fill it with thy fill it with thy truth.’”

“Why, mother, you will give me more away,” cried Katie.

“That’s a great deal to give,” said

“No, very little,” replied M

"Hundreds of people have given up friends, money, their native land, and even their lives. They thought nothing too precious to be given for the truth."

"Tell us about those people," said Fred.

"But a short time ago," continued his mother, "in some countries Christians were so cruelly persecuted that they were not sure of their lives from one day to another. They could not stay in their pleasant homes as we do, but were forced to wander among the mountains, and live in dreary caves. Many perished from hunger and cold; but that was better than dying by the hands of their cruel enemies. Sometimes on the holy Sabbath day they would meet very secretly in the depth of some forest, and try to have a little service together. But often, while they were in the midst of singing and praying, an alarm would be given that the soldiers were coming, and the little band would hastily break up and run to hide

themselves. And often the attack was so sudden, that many of the weak, frightened people could not run fast enough, and the rough soldiers would come thundering along on their strong horses, and catching the poor hunted creatures, they would carry them back into the city."

"What happened to them then?" said Fred, with reddening cheeks.

"Oh, they were taken before a cruel company of men, and asked if they would give up their religion—that is, if they would sell the truth. Then, if they nobly and bravely refused, they were taken into a room of torture, and made to suffer most terrible agony."

"What was done to them?" asked Fred.

"Sometimes their thumbs were put into a screw that pinched them tighter and tighter, till they were completely crushed. Sometimes their bare feet were roasted upon a fire; and a great many other cruel things

were done, which I will not tell you now," said Mrs. Lane, as she saw Katie quietly crying to herself.

"Well, didn't any of them ever give up?" asked Fred.

"Yes," said his mother; "sometimes the agony was too great, especially for the very young and tender ones. But they were very few in number compared with those who were 'faithful unto death.' Some children, not a great deal older than you, boldly confessed that they had 'bought the truth,' and no torture could make them sell it. One little word could have saved them from being burned alive, but they would not say it. So their poor bodies were surrounded with wood—the cruel flames rose around them, and the little martyrs were wrapped in fire."

"O mother, didn't they cry out then?" said little Katie, vividly remembering the pain of a recently burned finger.

"Why, I have heard," replied her mother, "that many of them were so happy that they did not seem to feel the pain of the body, but sang the most triumphant songs, as if the wreaths of fire were only crowns of glory. They sang, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for *thou* art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' And though it was a fearful path, they knew it led to heaven. It was only a little while to suffer, and their enemies could not hurt their souls. Oh, what a glorious moment it must have been, when the soul at last struggled from the poor, blackened body, and soaring above all the taunts and torments of its persecutors, exchanged the sufferings of earth for the sweet peace of heaven. One moment writhing in the cruel fire; the next reposing in the green pastures and beside the still waters of God's love. Ah, how happy they must have been when they st

before the great God, saying, 'I have kept thy truth!'"

They now reached the home of poor sick Mrs. Brown, and Fred and Katie waited at the door until their mother came out again. When they were once more on the way home, Fred said,—

"Mother, *I* mean to buy the truth."

"I am very glad," she replied; "and are you willing to give up everything—your whole heart and life—to God?"

"People are not burned now, are they?"

"No; but still it is not an easy thing to keep the truth. There are so many little temptations every day and every hour, that you will need as much firmness and courage as to bear one great trial. It will be a constant struggle."

"Well, I think I can do it," said Fred, with a great deal of self-confidence. "If I had been one of those children, I should never have given up, I know."

His mother looked a little sad, and said, " ' Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' I remember when my little son's fingers were accidentally pinched in the door, there was a great outcry. If he could not bear pain more patiently than that, I'm afraid he would make rather a poor martyr."

Fred blushed, and said more humbly, "I'm afraid I couldn't be a martyr after all. If my thumb were pinched much harder, I'm afraid I should say anything just to get it out."

Fred felt softened as he reached home in the quiet summer twilight, and taking Katie aside, he proposed that they should both go to God that night, and giving themselves to him, should ask him for his truth.

"But what if I should sell it?" said timid Katie.

"Oh, we must ask God to help us, as mother said, and then, Katie, *I'll keep an*


eye on you," said Fred, with that dangerous self-confidence creeping back into his heart.

"Well," said humble little Katie, "then I'll try."

God will help both of these little children when they ask him, but I think Fred, particularly, will have great need to "watch and pray."

CHAPTER II.

A BAD BARGAIN.

“REDERICK,” said Mr. Lane to his son one day, as they rose from the dinner table, “I wish you to take this basket immediately to old Mrs. Brown. The poor old woman has been much worse, and I fear she often lacks good and nourishing food. Your mother has packed some fruit and several dainties, which I think will please her, and at the bottom is a little money which Katie has put in in some curious way. You must tell her little granddaughter to buy whatever she needs most.”

“O Fred,” cried Katie, with a radiant face, “you would never guess where the

money is. It was all in silver, and mother let me put it in two little cakes, and I want you to tell Mrs. Brown that the cakes are a little *heavy*, but I'm sure they'll *agree* with her," and Katie laughed. "Now be sure and tell us just what she says, Fred, and come back soon. I'll wait for you under the old elm-tree. Hurry, Fred, won't you?"

"Yes, robin," said Fred, kissing his sweet-voiced sister, "I'll tell you all about it;" and waving his hat to father and mother, he sprang down the walk, cleared the low fence with a flying leap, and was out of sight before Katie's admiring "Oh!" had fairly escaped her lips.

At first he made rapid progress, but soon the heat of the mid-day sun caused him to slacken his pace. Presently the basket seemed to grow heavy. "Oh," thought Fred, as he lifted it from one side to the other, "how very warm and tired I am! I

don't believe Grannie Brown will suffer if I rest a few minutes," and down he sat upon the green bank.

Presently there was a sound of busy, tramping feet, and merry voices, and round the corner of the lane came a dozen or more boys. "Oh, there's Fred Lane," cried one, "the very boy we want.—Come, Fred, you must go with us."

"Where?" said Fred.

"Oh, we are going on the water. We have two boats, and we're going to have a naval battle," said Jim Price, the leader of the company. "Those boys there with red tape on their arms are the British, and we with the peacock feathers are the Americans. We've all got our pop-guns, and one or two bows and arrows, and two whole bunches of fire-crackers for cannon. Whenever a boy is hit three times, he's out of the play; and whichever boat-load loses the most men, that company will have to buy cakes and

candy at Mrs. Mill's, to treat the whole party. Then we're all going to Picnic Island to have a celebration."

Fred's eyes shone with delight.

"Come, will you go?" said Jim.

The question recalled Fred to his senses. A shade of vexation crossed his face. "Oh no, I can't. I must carry this basket to old Mrs. Brown."

"You can do that afterwards. When we come home will be time enough," said Jim.

"But what will I do with the basket?"

"Oh, we'll just set it in the end of the boat. It will be safe enough there."

"But you will be gone so long."

"No, we won't; and besides, if you are in such a hurry, you can go after the battle, and not stay to the picnic."

Fred still hesitated. "But mother always wishes me to ask her permission when I go on the water."

"O you girl baby!" sneered Jim. "You

will be gone such a little while you need not tell your mother anything about it."

This advice to deceive his mother ought to have shown Fred that these were not good boys, and he should have resolutely gone on his way. But although he knew very well that his mother would disapprove of his going anywhere with Jim Price, still the pleasure of the sail, and the delightful novelty of the mimic battle, proved too great temptations for poor, weak Fred, and after a few moments of perplexity, he said hastily,—

"I believe I *will* go for a little while."

Then the boys gave three cheers, and appointed him first mate on the ship *North Star*. So the boys went on in high spirits, and rowing out into the middle of the river, the battle was prosecuted with much vigour. Soon, however, they became more excited, and the little *North Star* pitched and rolled dangerously, and once was so near capsizing

that Fred thought he was gone, and clung desperately to the seat. The little boat righted itself again, but as Fred, with a pale face, entreated to be again set on shore, he noticed, with great consternation, that his basket was gone. A search through the boat was of no avail. "It must have gone over in that last squall," laughed Jim; but it was no joke to Fred. All the extent of his disobedience and misfortune suddenly burst upon him, and he thought himself the most miserable boy in the world.

"Do look at the baby," cried Jim, directing the boys' attention to Fred's unhappy countenance. "I believe it's going to cry. Let's put it on shore, so it can run to its mamma;" and Jim began to row hastily in.

Fred was very indignant, but he knew he deserved it all, and his heart was too full to speak.

"Now, don't go home with that face," said Jim, as he left him. "Just tell your

mother that you took the things, and the old woman was very thankful, and all that, and I don't believe it will ever come out."

Fred walked slowly and sadly home. How could he tell his mother and dear little Katie how wicked he had been? He had never told a lie before; but would it be so very bad just this once? He would tell the truth some time, perhaps in the morning, but he couldn't now. Poor Katie would be so disappointed, and his mother so sad. It would be so easy just to say what Jim Price told him. Why, the other boys wouldn't think anything of telling just one story; and this *should* be the first and last time. While he was yet undecided, he came in sight of home, and laughing little Katie bounded to meet him.

"Oh, you have been gone so long. What *did* she say? Tell me everything. Was she very glad?"

Fred turned away his head, and with

burning cheeks replied, "Oh yes, she was very glad. She thanked us all a thousand times."

"Did she try the cakes?"

"Yes," said Fred desperately; "and she said it was the best *fruit* cake she ever ate."

Again came Katie's ringing laugh. "Well, how is she, Fred?"

"Better, this afternoon."

"Ah, that's good. But how very warm and tired you are! Are you sick?" said Katie, anxiously, kissing the rough, brown hand she held in her own.

"No," almost groaned Fred, snatching his hand away. "But I *am* tired. Leave me a little while to rest under the tree."

Katie ran to tell her mother all the pleasant news, and miserable Fred, with closed eyes, thought over the events of the afternoon.

"I have sold the truth," he groaned to

himself. "I, who was going to watch over dear, good Katie, *I* have told a lie!" He shivered and opened his eyes. Everything seemed changed. His old friends, the trees, seemed to be shaking their heads at him, as the wind sighed through the branches, and the beautiful crimson sunset, at which Katie had been gazing in admiration, only looked red and angry to him. He had read in a little German fairy story how the flowers knew bad children, and faded and shrank away when they tried to pick them so now he stretched forth his hand ver carefully to touch a little blue violet growing near. To his momentary relief, the flower remained just the same.

"The violets don't know," said Fred, a long breath. But oh, how wretched was! Perhaps poor Mrs. Brown would because she had no money to buy them. What should he do? Oh, if he were a bird singing so happily up in the

Presently the children were called in to tea, and as there were visitors present, Fred avoided further questioning, and his unhappy looks and loss of appetite escaped the notice of his mother.

He went to bed early, hoping to sleep; but never was he more mistaken. There was no rest for that heavy heart. How angrily the wind blew! Oh, what if old Mrs. Brown *should* die, wouldn't he be hung for a murderer? Oh, what if God should send his angel that night to take his life! He remembered Ananias and Sapphira, and shuddered. Suddenly there came a blinding flash of light, and Fred almost shrieked with terror as it was followed by a heavy peal of thunder.

"The lightning knows it!" cried Fred wildly; "the lightning knows it, and will look through and through me." Then came another flash; and hastily jumping out of bed, Fred ran to hide himself in a dark

closet. But no sooner was he crouched upon the floor than a little verse came into his mind, as if somebody whispered it, "Thou God seest me."

"It is of no use," sobbed Fred, coming out again; "I can't hide."

"Fred," said a sweet voice, "are you frightened?" and a flash revealed the calm face of little Katie peeping in at the door.

"Yes," sobbed Fred, "I am."

"Why, you never used to be. Don't you remember mother said God always takes care of us. Shall I say some verses to you?"

Fred made no reply, and Katie began: "Though I walk through the valley of—"

"No, no, not that, Katie!" almost shrieked Fred; "that is what the martyrs said, but O Katie, Katie, *I* have sold the truth!"

"What for?" said Katie in blank surprise.

"O Katie, I've sold it; and instead

being any better off, I'm the most miserable boy in the world. I've sold all my pleasant and happy thoughts, and now I am only wicked and frightened."

"That's a very bad bargain," said Katie, in her wise simplicity.

"I should think it was," groaned Fred; and then he could contain himself no longer, but poured the whole story into Katie's sympathizing ears. "Now I suppose you perfectly despise me," said Fred, as he heard her low sobs. "You can never love me again."

Katie could not speak, but throwing her arms around his neck, kissed him hastily, and ran out of the room.

"Even Katie will not stay with me," thought Fred, despairingly, as he threw himself on the bed. "I wonder how it will ever end. Will I ever be happy again?"

"My son!" said a sad voice, and Fred knew that Katie had sent his mother; but he could not answer a word.

"Did my little Fred tell a lie?"

Fred could restrain himself no longer. "O mother, will you hate me?" he cried. "Can you never forgive me, nor trust me again?"

Then he rapidly poured forth a full history of all his temptation and sin, and ended with again imploring his mother's forgiveness.

"Remember, Fred," said she, "that you have offended against your heavenly Father."

"Oh, I know it!" said Fred. "Can he ever forgive me? Did he ever forgive any one who sold the truth?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lane. "Peter denied him thrice, and yet he was forgiven, and lived to be a noble servant of God. He must have repented deeply; for don't you remember that when Jesus looked on him with such pity and sadness, Peter went out and wept bitterly?"

"O mother, I think he has looked or

me," wept poor unhappy Fred. "I'm sure I repent; but I don't see how I can be forgiven, I have been so wicked."

With many sweet Bible words she taught and comforted her truly repentant boy, until he became more composed, and was able to seek peace and forgiveness where only they can be found.

The next morning, although every one knew of his disgrace, Fred was much happier than the evening before. His father had intended to take him to the city that day, on a long-promised excursion, but he thought it only right to tell Fred he had forfeited that pleasure. Fred accepted the sentence without a murmur, although the tears stood in Katie's eyes. And after breakfast, when Katie and mamma started with another basket for old Mrs. Brown, Fred felt it keenly that he was not asked to accompany them. He tried vainly to study while they were gone, and at the first

flutter of Katie's blue ribbons he was at the gate.

"How is she?" he cried breathlessly.


"Better," said smiling Katie.

Fred turned away to hide his tears, as said to himself, "How good God is to me

Fred worked in the garden a couple hours every night after school, for several weeks, till he had earned all the money he had lost, and faithfully at the end of every week he carried the little sum to old M Brown, who, to his great joy, improved rapidly.

Fred is so truthful now, that all the family seem to have forgotten that he ever told a lie; but he himself will remember through life the night of misery, when he reaped the bitter fruit of his "bad bargain

BLACK LAKE.

“ FATHER!” cried little Will Brown, suddenly resting from his weary toil over the rough lava. “Do you see those great white clouds rising from the ground? I do believe we are almost there.”

“I think you are right,” replied his father; “and in another half-hour we shall stand by the famous Geysers.”

Will’s eyes sparkled. “I have thought about them so much,” said he; “but I never dreamed, when I was studying Iceland in my old geography last winter, that I should be here so soon. How very kind you are to take me!”

"Oh, you know I couldn't live without you, Will," said Mr. Brown, looking down with sad tenderness upon the fair-haired motherless boy. "You're a capital little travelling companion."

"Yes, I'll say that for him," exclaimed one of the guides; "I expected the children would be a great trouble, but I haven't heard a whimper. He's a brave traveller."

Will looked up with a proud smile, and continued his conversation with his father.

"But I wouldn't live here for a kingdom's father, though there *are* so many strange things to see. It seems as if something terrible was always going on under the ground, and as if at any time all Iceland might blow right up in the air like a great rocket. I'm sure last night I heard a very strange noise, and the ground shook as if some one had told it a terrible secret, and it was all in a tremble about it."

Mr. Brown smiled. "Oh, I think Ice

land is safe for to-day, Will. You know the people say it is the very 'best land the sun shines upon;' and don't you think God is able to preserve it amidst every peril?"

"Yes, father, I do believe God takes care of this country; for," continued he, a look of awe marking his expressive face, "I read in my Bible this morning, 'He toucheth the hills, and they *smoke*,' and I could not help thinking that he must have touched *Iceland* very often."

Before his father could reply, a strange, but intelligent-looking boy, three or four years older than Will, stood before them, as suddenly as if he had risen out of the ground. The guides spoke angrily to him, but the boy walked fearlessly up to Mr. Brown, the foremost of the party.

"Mads Jagel," said he, pointing to himself, by way of introduction; and then, in very broken English, he offered his services in showing up the great steam-fountains.

"Don't have anything to do with him, sir," said the guides, impatiently. "He's a bad, ill-tempered boy, and will make mischief if he joins us." But Mads looked so imploringly, that Will began to plead in his favour, with such good success that at last Mr. Brown said, "Well, let the lad go with us. He certainly needs help, poor fellow, and I will gladly pay him whatever he earns."

With a grateful look at Mr. Brown, and an equally vivid glance of triumph at the discomfited guides, ragged little Mads journeyed on by the side of Will.

Before long, the whole party stood in wonder and awe before the mysterious Geysers; and as the ground shook and moaned, and suddenly sent forth a column of steam, more than a hundred feet high, Will, trembling, grasped his father's hand, and wondered if it was anything like the strange pillar of cloud that used to go before the children of Israel.

But Mads was particularly lively when they came to the fountain called Stroke, or the Churn. It was very quiet when they first arrived, and did not seem disposed to offer any salute. But Mads bustled about, with a very knowing look, gathering quantities of moss and stones, which he threw into the tunnel. Immediately there was a loud trembling, as if the old Churn were in a great passion at the insult, and soon a grand column rose in the air, throwing out all the rubbish in high indignation.

Will could not help clapping his hands, with a shrill "hurrah!" although there was something quite frightful in the demonstration, and Mads fairly rolled on the ground in ecstasies of delight.

The next morning, as the travellers continued their journey, at Will's earnest request Mads and his dog Skal accompanied them. The country was very desolate, with here and there a tree no larger than a lilac-

bush, but Mads and Will enlivened the walk with a conversation helped out by a variety of expressive gestures. Mads was full of the wonders of Iceland, and he told Will many queer stories, not altogether true, how "under the terrible mountain of Hecla, the evil spirits lived, and sometimes when they quarrelled, great streams of fire rushed from their mouths, and rolled over everything burning up houses and people, and sometimes drinking up a whole river."

Will's eyes grew large as he listened to these wonderful stories, but soon he saw for himself something stranger than he had ever dreamed in his worst nightmares. They were just upon the edge of a precipice, and looking over, they saw at its base five or six great caldrons of some thick black fluid boiling and steaming away with a terrible noise.

"What is it?" cried Will, clasping his father's hand, and turning quite pale.

"It is boiling mud, sir," said one of the guides; "and if any one falls in there, he will never come out again."

Just then, Skal, who had been gambolling about Will's feet, stepped upon a loose stone, which rolled, and before any one could help him, the poor dog had tumbled over the precipice with a fearful howl of terror. Down, down he fell into one of the horrible pits; and as Will bent over, he could just see the hot, black paste closing over his bushy tail. With a cry of horror, he buried his face in his hands; but a sharp clutch upon his arm made him look up to see Mads, with two eyes burning like fire in the midst of his white face.

"*You* did it," gasped he, looking fiercely at Will. "You kill my Skal!"

"No, indeed," cried Will; "he put his foot on a stone—*so*, and rolled over."

"You *kick* him," said Mads, slowly. "You wish see him die in mud. I forget—*never!*"

With streaming eyes, and looks of the most profound sympathy, poor Will explained the occurrence again and again, but Mads still walked in sullen silence.

Towards night, however, Mads grew more cheerful, and as the travellers halted earlier than usual, he proposed to Will that they should take a short walk before dark, as he had something very curious to show him. Will felt some reluctance, but not liking to refuse Mads when he was just returning to good-humour, he at length set out with him, promising his father soon to return.

On they went over the desolate country, Mads entertaining Will with wild old legends about the curious island, till, before he was aware, he was all alone with Mads in the wildest, strangest place he ever saw.

"Where are we?" he asked in sudden alarm. "Let us go home, Mads; I care to see anything curious to-night."

"Almost there," said Mads. "Hark! it calls you."

"What?" asked Will, with a failing heart, as he heard a dull, steady roar. "Is it a bear?"

"Oh no!" said Mads, with an unpleasant laugh. "Here we are," and dragging him forward, he saw lying, ten or fifteen feet beneath him, another of those terrible pits of mud. He shrank back with a cry of terror, while Mads clutched his arm and dragged him again to the edge.

"See big pond—Black Lake—no bottom;" and Will saw that it was very large, and boiling furiously, while in the centre rose a black column several feet in height.

"I don't like Black Lake at all, Mads. Do let's go home."

"You *never* go home," said Mads, with burning eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked Will faintly.

"I love Skal very much. You kill him—I kill *you*," responded Mads savagely.

"Oh, you cannot mean it! You are in fun, dear, *dear* Mads. You know I didn't kill poor Skal. It is a joke; isn't it, Mads?"

Mads grimly shook his head.

Poor Will looked over the dreary country, half visible in the twilight. Over all the barren rocks and fields of lava there was no human being in sight, and he was alone on the brink of this horrible lake, with Mads's strong clutch on his arm. It must be a dream; why couldn't he wake? And he rubbed his eyes and looked around piteously; but, alas! it was no dream, and Mads was still watching him with those fiery eyes.

"Mads," cried Will, with a sudden hope, "I will buy five, six, *twelve* dogs, beautiful dogs, with long ears as soft as silk!"

"There is no more Skal," said Mads briefly.

Will took out his little purse and offered the contents. Mads threw it contemptuously into the bubbling lake.

"Then I must surely die?" Mads nodded.

"O Mads! how can you be so wicked? You cannot, cannot mean it;" but Mads rose as if to throw him in.

An agonizing scream burst from Will's lips, while Mads laughed contemptuously.

"Oh, if I *must* die," cried poor Will, "kill me with your knife, Mads, *dear* Mads, but do not throw me into that horrible hot mud!"

But Mads replied, "No; Skäl die in mud, —you die too."

"Wait a minute, then," said little Will, the cold drops gathering on his forehead. "I must pray first."

"Black spirit won't hear," said Mads.

"But *God* will."

"What God?" asked Mads quickly; "are you Christian?"

"I hope so," said Will humbly.

"Pray then," said Mads more gently, for he had heard something of religion from the many travellers. "Christian's God is great spirit."

Then little Will fell upon his knees, and began his simple prayer:—

"O God, I have been very wicked, but do thou forgive me for Jesus' sake; and, O God," he sobbed, "do thou save me, for I am so afraid of that dreadful mud, and I am such a *little* boy."

"Enough," said Mads, shaking his shoulder.

"One minute more, dear Mads!"

"One minute," said Mads, walking away.

"And, O God, comfort my dearest father. Don't let him think I ran away. Forgive Mads, dear Saviour, and give him a new heart. Oh!" continued poor Will, a new hope springing up in his heart, "give it to him this moment, if it's possible—"

A wild cry interrupted him, and looking

up, he could see nothing of Mads. With shaking limbs he hastened to the edge of the precipice, and there, having made an uncertain step in the dim light, Mads had fallen a few feet, and finding it impossible to clamber up the smooth side, was hanging on desperately to a little twig.

"You are safe," whispered a voice. "Now let the wicked boy fall into the pit himself."

It was but a moment, and from Will's generous heart arose the fervent prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." Then, with eager hands, he unbound his long stout woollen tippet, and fastening one end to a tough little shrub, dropped the other over to Mads. Oh, joy! he could just reach it, and came clambering up like a young squirrel. As his head appeared above the top, poor Will fell fainting upon the ground. Mads stole up to him with a wondering, reverential expression, and lifting him in his arms, carried him tenderly home.

Will was sick for many days, while Mads never left his side. At last, when he was again able to speak, Mads said suddenly one day, with downcast eyes,—

“Why save Mads? Why not let Mads die? Is it Christian?”

Will smiled and nodded.

“Tell *me*,” said Mads vehemently, turning to hide his tears. “It is good. I be Christian too.” And Will, day after day, as he grew better, told Mads the beautiful story of the Cross, and taught him how to pray.

Before Will left Iceland, poor Mads hoped that he, too, was a Christian, and he always carefully carried in his bosom Will’s Bible, which, although he could not read a word of it, he regarded as his most precious treasure.





